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Super Bowl Shocker: Interstate Child Prostitution Ring Busted in Connection to Big Game

on FEBRUARY 6, 2014 · 2 COMMENTS

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by BJW Nashe

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I followed the Super Bowl a bit too closely this year, and then I hated myself afterward. Yet I struggled to put my finger on the precise source of my self-loathing.

Perhaps it was just a matter of over-indulgence. I took a heavy dose of the build-up, the hype, the nervous predictions. I wallowed in the pre-game show like a pig in excrement, laughed like hell as Bill O'Reilly made an ass out of himself during his interview with President Obama, and stared in disbelief at the ridiculous fur coat worn by Joe Namath as he strolled out to botch the opening coin toss. I dwelled on every excruciating moment of the terrible game itself — from the first snap that sailed over Peyton Manning's head and into his own end zone, to the predictable finale in which a Gatorade bucket was dumped over the back of triumphant Seattle Seahawks coach Pete Carroll.



I sat through all of the lame commercials. Battled cognitive dissonance when Bob Dylan suddenly appeared and began rhapsodizing about American cars. Shook my head during the halftime extravaganza starring a simulation of James Brown (Bruno Mars), some shirtless ex-heroin addicts (the Red Hot Chili Peppers), a muddy sound system, and a ton of lights and fireworks. Then there was the extensive post-game coverage — an endless parade of interviews and highlights and whooping and hollering and hair-pulling and gnashing of teeth.

The whole ordeal ultimately failed to cohere into anything meaningful, however. The center would not hold, as Yeats put it. In fact there didn't seem to be any center at all. Not even a black hole, filled with negative meaning. The hype, the game, the aftermath — it added up to nothing of substance. Yet it was more than just the stupidity of the presentation and the anti-climactic nature of the game itself that was bothersome. There was something vaguely rotten at the core of the spectacle I'd witnessed on TV. Yet I couldn't figure out precisely what it was. Why had the Super Bowl "battered my heart" like Donne's "three-person'd God?"

Only now, days later, has a particular news story related to the Super Bowl provided some dreadful clarity. The essence of the big game has now been captured and brought into plain view. The headline says it all: "Super Bowl Prostitution Ring Forced Teens as Young as 13 into Sex Work."

The Associated Press is reporting that the FBI has rescued sixteen juveniles in the greater New York area who were forced to work as prostitutes in the days leading up to the Super Bowl. They were evidently coerced into servicing clients in high-priced "party pack" deals where drugs and sex are combined under one lump sum. Here are some excerpts from the AP story:



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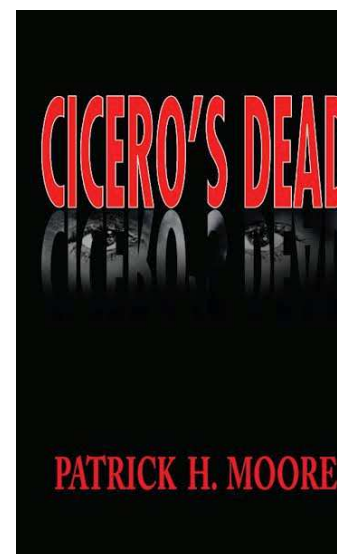
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"Officials said the children, some of whom had been reported missing by their families, ranged in age from 13 to 17. Six were found in Newark, N.J., six in New York City and four in New Haven, Conn.

"One of the minors, a 17-year-old girl, had spent the past two years with her pimp, said Michael Osborn, chief of the Violent Crimes Against Children unit at the FBI.

"More than 50 adult women who were forced to work as prostitutes were also rescued. More than 45 pimps were arrested and numerous guns seized, according to investigators.

"Some of the victims were from other countries, authorities said.

"Osborn said pimps forced their victims to come to the New York City area from 13 states ahead of the game held Sunday at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J. The rescues and arrests all took place during the two weeks leading up to the game.



"The operation came after months of investigative work to find sex trafficking rings and training for legions of law enforcement personnel, hospitality workers, airport employees and others on identifying the signs of sex trafficking. The New Jersey Attorney General's office set up a Super Bowl sex trafficking task force that included partners such as the FBI shortly after it was announced that the game would be held in New Jersey.

"As Super Bowl Sunday approached, law enforcement officers working on the operation saw advertisements starting to spike and suspects starting to travel, Osborn said.

"The FBI said its operation consisted of more than 50 law enforcement agencies. Last week, a Florida woman was arrested for allegedly trying to prostitute her 15-year-old daughter during the Super Bowl and authorities in New York City said the number of prostitution arrests jumped in the week leading up to the game.

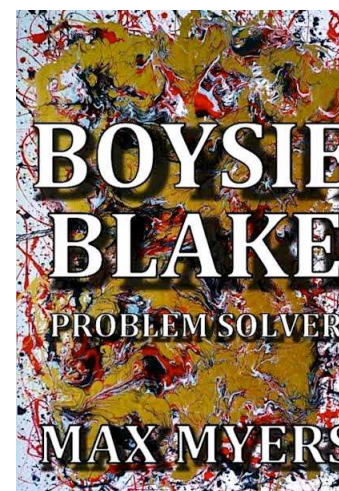
Obviously, kidnapping juveniles and forcing them into prostitution is a shocking and despicable crime. But should we really be surprised that such crimes are part of the equation on Super Bowl weekend?

One can argue that our whole society is based in part on various kinds of prostitution — otherwise referred to as *work*. Naturally our largest televised spectacle, the Super Bowl, will be a grand display of pimping and whoring, in which vast sums of money are paid to a multitude of people for various specialized services. The players, the officials, the announcers, the performers, the stadium employees, the celebrities in the ads — they are all prostitutes, insofar as they are paid to perform services for the benefit or enjoyment of others. They aren't kidnapped and forced into their line of work. It is a voluntary form of prostitution, often well compensated, but sometimes not. Whether any amount of money is enough for the players who are risking serious brain damage is debatable.



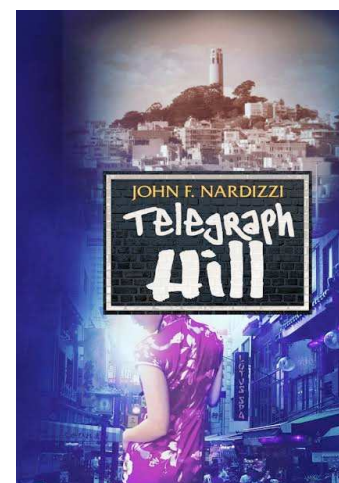
full well that some of the services desired by Super Bowl attendees are illegal — namely sex and drugs — only adds to the sense that what we see unfolding on TV is masking much of what is really going on during all the hoopla surrounding the big game. The sight of Joe Namath's fur coat suggests a level of decadence that the official discourse is not comfortable with live and "on the air." Such decadence requires the presence of a substantial criminal underworld operating beneath the shiny surface of the Super Bowl. Watching the game, one realizes that with this many people carrying loads of cash money into a single city to party down for a week or so, organized crime can't be that far away.

Of course organized crime is right there in the thick of things at the Super Bowl — perhaps even sitting in private luxury boxes. And now we are confronted with this horrible story in the news about a teen prostitution ring. We can argue until our eyeballs are about to burst that prohibition does not work in the long run — that laws banning prostitution and drugs only lead to increased crime, as organized networks inevitably emerge to supply black



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market goods and services. We can argue all we want that if prostitution was legalized and regulated, we might be able to eliminate underground teen prostitution rings, sharply reduce human trafficking in our cities, and create a safer environment for sex workers to ply their trade.

We can point to the Super Bowl and make these arguments, explaining that the whole event will always be tainted with various types of prostitution, but the fact is most Americans don't want to confront such notions. Besides, even if we had the most sensible vice laws in the world, there's no getting around the fact that certain people like to do things that the rest of us find reprehensible — like pay for sex with juveniles. And other people are more than willing to exploit those desires. I suppose the folks at the FBI have no need to worry about job security.



One thing is certain: the Super Bowl will always be a focal point for decadence and depravity. Even the most outlandish behavior associated with the event should not shock us anymore.

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2 Responses to *super bowl shocker: interstate child prostitution ring busted in connection to big game*



Rick says:

February 6, 2014 at 4:29 pm

BJW – I share many of your sentiments about the tawdriness of the Super Bowl. I imagine that our modern-day “Big Game” spectacle is not much different from the games in the Roman Colosseum albeit with not quite so much variety, unless you include the unusual commercials. You may have heard or read about the Roman Games, in which they would have gladiator contests, with both people and sometimes wild animals, and they would even sometimes flood the Colosseum and have naval battles. The usual vices of the underbelly of society — prostitution, gambling, drugs, and crime — would always accompany the Roman Games, just as with the Super Bowl. It seems that whenever large crowds gather, the less desirable activities of society aren't very far behind. Not much has changed in 2,000 plus years.

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Lise LaSalle says:

February 9, 2014 at 8:04 am

“I wallowed in the pre-game show like a pig in excrement, laughed like hell as Bill O'Reilly made an ass out of himself during his interview with President Obama”

Guilty pleasure or insanity maybe but I know the feeling.

I enjoy football and I wish it would not have to be attached to so much manure. Money makes the world go around.

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